

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
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Dear Prime Minister,

This is the second time I write to you regarding the death of my nine-year-old daughter, Ella Roberta, on the 15th February 2013. Ella was hospitalised 28 times in 28 months and admitted to ICU five times, fighting back from the brink of death. Her condition meant her lungs frequently filled with mucus, which made her feel as if she was constantly suffocating.

As you know, a second inquest into Ella's death in December 2020 found that she died of asthma contributed to by exposure to excessive air pollution, and that her primary source of exposure was traffic emissions. Ella is now the only person in the United Kingdom to have air pollution listed as a cause of death on her death certificate.

I write to you today - as the father of a young child and another unborn and as the UK's leader - to urge you to protect children around the country from suffering the way Ella did. You can do this by ensuring that the Environment Bill sets air quality targets in line with the [World Health Organisation's Air Quality Guidelines](#) for the protection of human health.

Between 36,000 and 40,000 people in the U.K. die prematurely every year due to exposure to air pollution. Among those are 22-24 children and young people who die from asthma every year, with 8-12 in London. The U.K. has one of the highest death rates from asthma in Europe, whereas in Finland, a country with better air quality, no children die from asthma.

The Environment Bill is our once-in-a-generation opportunity to ensure that children born now – including your own children - can grow up breathing safe, healthy air.

I ask you to meet with me urgently, along with Professor Sir Stephen Holgate, the expert witness who first linked Ella's death to air pollution near our home, to discuss what we can do now to save the lives of children around the country. There is no more time to waste.

Coroner Philip Barlow's [Prevention of Future Deaths](#) report regarding Ella's inquest, published on 21st April 2021, identified as a matter of concern the fact that our national legal limits for particulate matter (PM) are set far higher than the levels recommended in the WHO Air Quality Guidelines, and concluded that legally binding targets based on WHO Guidelines would reduce the number of deaths from air pollution in the U.K.

As it stands, however, the Bill goes nowhere near treating air quality with the seriousness it deserves. The Government's intention to hold a consultation on air quality targets between

January and October 2022 risks letting another 22-24 children die from asthma before we begin the work it takes to deliver air that is acceptable to breathe.

I was heartened in September to see the House of Lords pass an amendment to the Environment Bill stating that by 2030 the PM2.5 air quality target must: (a) be less than or equal to $10\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and (b) so far as practicable, follow the WHO Guidelines. But this amendment now requires the support of your Government when it returns to the House of Commons for consideration this month if it is to become law.

In your speech to the UN General Assembly in September, you stated that "it is time for us to listen to the warnings of the scientists". I implore you to do just that in protecting the health of our youngest and future generations.

The WHO introduced new Air Quality Guidelines on 22nd September, based on five years of systematic review by scientists and over 500 studies. The updated guideline level for PM2.5 is $5\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. If this is achieved, nearly 80% of the millions of deaths worldwide linked to PM2.5 pollution would be avoided. Scientists have stressed that even this new limit should not be considered safe. Particulate pollutants cause organ damage at every level and every age. Achieving this target is just the minimum governments can do to protect our public health.

Air pollution in this country is a pandemic. Once we have clear, ambitious, far-sighted legislation in place to improve air quality, we need to carry out a country-wide, Government-supported public health campaign to inform people of the dangers of air pollution and help them understand why changes are not only needed but widely beneficial.

Stephen Holgate and I are ready to support the Government in this public health campaign however we are needed. Sir Stephen is MRC clinical professor of immunopharmacology and honorary consultant physician in medicine at the University of Southampton, Special Advisor to the Royal College of Physicians on Air Quality and UKRI Clean Air Champion.

With less than two weeks before the U.K. hosts the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, setting an ambitious air quality target in the Environment Bill will save lives and set an example for the whole world to follow.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Rosamund Adoo-Kissi-Debrah (mother of Ella)